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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and on the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in that country

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the request of the Security Council contained in the statement issued by its President on 26 September 2001 (S/PRST/2001/25), in which the Council requested me to continue to keep it regularly informed about the situation in the Central African Republic and about the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country (BONUCA).

2. The report provides an update on the political, security, socio-economic, humanitarian and human rights developments in the Central African Republic and on the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) (which succeeded BONUCA on 1 January 2010) since my previous report, dated 8 December 2009 (S/2009/627). It also provides an update on ongoing efforts to put in place the structure and resources for the effective functioning of BINUCA and on the integration process.

II. Political situation

3. The political situation in the Central African Republic since December has been characterized by efforts to implement the recommendations of the December 2008 inclusive political dialogue, particularly those relating to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and preparations for the conduct and organization of transparent and credible presidential and legislative elections.

4. Since its establishment in January 2009, the Dialogue Follow-up Committee has held monthly sessions and four quarterly sessions to review the status of implementation of the recommendations of the inclusive political dialogue. In its assessment report published at the end of its fourth quarterly session, in January 2010, the Dialogue Follow-up Committee noted that only 44 out of 116 recommendations adopted by the inclusive political dialogue had been fully implemented, representing an execution rate of 37.93 per cent. The highest rate of implementation was related to recommendations dealing with socio-economic issues

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(44.7 per cent), while those pertaining to security and armed groups registered the lowest implementation rates.

5. The Dialogue Follow-up Committee dispatched three sensitization missions to various parts of the country, including localities affected by rebellions in the south-east, north-west and north-east, from 30 March to 14 April. The missions focused on the establishment of the local electoral committees, the local disarmament, demobilization and reintegration committees and the security situation in the electoral constituencies. In a report addressed to my Special Representative, Sahle-Work Zewde, dated 21 April, the Committee noted that, owing to a lack of resources, the local electoral committees were not fully operational. The Committee's report also highlighted the weakness of the local disarmament, demobilization and reintegration committees, the delay in the regrouping of the former combatants and restrictions of the free movement of persons in the rebel-controlled areas, particularly in the north-western prefectures of Ouham and Ouham-Pendé, which prevented the Committee's team from visiting the towns of Paoua and Ndélé.

6. On 20 April, President François Bozizé issued a decree relieving two Ministers of their functions, namely, the Minister of Communication, Cyriaque Gonda, and the Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, Elio Ouéfio, who was also the Minister in charge of elections. With regard to the latter, it should be recalled that the opposition had made repeated calls for his resignation or replacement on the grounds that there was an incompatibility of functions between his role as Secretary-General of the ruling Kwa na Kwa party and that of Minister in charge of elections.

Elections

7. On the basis of the recommendations of the electoral needs assessment mission conducted from 29 October to 12 November, a steering committee to support the electoral process was formally set up on 22 December. The Steering Committee on Elections, which is chaired by my Special Representative, comprises representatives of the Independent Electoral Commission, including its President, who serves as Vice-Chair, a senior representative of the Government, my Deputy Special Representative, in his capacity as Resident Coordinator and Resident Representative, and key international partners (France, the United States of America, the European Union and the African Union). After an initial lull resulting from the events described below, the Steering Committee resumed its deliberations in early March and has since then been meeting on a weekly basis.

8. On 14 January 2010, a loose opposition alliance, the Collectif des forces du changement (CFC), which comprises the main opposition coalitions, the Union des forces vives de la nation (UFVN) and the "other parties" and the politico-military group Armée populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie (APRD), decided to suspend its participation in the Commission, resulting in the paralysis of the electoral process for a period of about two months. That decision was prompted by what the opposition characterized as the Commission's lack of impartiality, flaws in the establishment of local electoral committees and the lack of credibility of the electoral list, among other complaints. The opposition also demanded the resignation of the President of the Commission and the replacement of some of the

opposition's representatives on the Commission, for what it regarded as shortcomings in the discharge of their mandates.

9. In a bid to find a solution to this deepening crisis of confidence, President Bozizé, on 30 January, convened a meeting of national stakeholders and international partners to discuss the grievances of the opposition. At that meeting, he mandated the National Mediator Paulin Pomodimo, the former Archbishop of Bangui, to undertake mediation efforts to help resolve the crisis.

10. Those efforts culminated in the signing, on 13 February, of a memorandum of understanding by the Government and the entities that participated in the inclusive political dialogue. The memorandum of understanding, which formally resolved the crisis, allowed the opposition to replace some of its representatives in the Commission and provided for a review of the composition of the local electoral committees, including those established in the Central African Republic's overseas diplomatic and consular missions, the conduct of an audit of the Commission's finances, the strengthening of the capacity of the Commission with the support of international partners and available national expertise and the review and updating of the 2005 electoral code of conduct.

11. Following the signing of the memorandum of understanding, President Bozizé issued a new presidential decree, on 24 February, which allowed the opposition to replace its representatives in the Independent Electoral Commission. The new members of the Commission were formally sworn in on 1 March. Meanwhile, the representative of the Rassemblement démocratique centrafricain, founded by the late former president, André Kolingba, which was experiencing internal tensions, was not sworn in. On the same day, President Bozizé issued another decree setting 25 April 2010 as the date for the first round of parliamentary and presidential elections. On 2 March, he issued a third decree on the demarcation of constituencies for the legislative elections. The opposition issued a statement on 3 March in which it claimed that the presidential decree setting the date of 25 April for the conduct of the polls had been based on a unilateral recommendation of the President of the Commission and had been formulated before the new opposition members were sworn in.

12. The opposition also raised several questions relating to the state of preparedness of the Independent Electoral Commission, security challenges arising from the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and the issue of internally displaced populations and refugees, which in the opposition's view made it premature to hold elections by the date set by the President. The opposition emphasized that progress on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, particularly the completion of the disarmament and demobilization of former combatants, was a prerequisite for a reliable voter registration process and for the free movement of political actors in the run-up to any elections.

13. On 24 March, the Independent Electoral Commission presented a progress report on its activities to the Steering Committee on Elections at its fourth meeting. The report reviewed the preparations for the elections and concluded that it would be technically impossible for the Commission to comply with its initial schedule. The report was generally welcomed by the main international partners.

14. On 30 March, President Bozizé issued a decree fixing the new date of 16 May for the conduct of legislative and presidential elections. This prompted CFC to issue

a communiqué, dated 5 April, in which it announced that it would not field candidates on the grounds that conditions did not exist for the conduct of transparent, credible and consensual elections on 16 May. As a result, the expiry date of 9 April passed without the opposition having submitted any candidates for the presidential and legislative elections. Thus, by the time the present report was being finalized, only President Bozizé and former President Patassé had filed the necessary presidential candidacy forms.

15. Meanwhile, President Bozizé received former President Patassé, at the National Assembly, for the second time since Mr. Patassé returned from exile in 2009. After the meeting, Mr. Patassé announced that he had been mandated by President Bozizé to work with national stakeholders in order to find a political consensus on all the challenges besetting the electoral process. However, Mr. Patassé's initiatives in that regard were short-lived because of the opposition's reluctance to participate in mediation efforts led by the former President.

16. As part of the effort to resolve the disagreements between the opposition and the Independent Electoral Commission on the electoral process, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the International Organization of la Francophonie, former President Pierre Buyoya of Burundi, arrived in Bangui on 13 April for a series of consultations with national authorities, political parties, civil society and international partners. At the same time, representatives of the international community, along with my Special Representative, also pursued their facilitation role to try to break the impasse and create an enabling environment for the organization and conduct of transparent and credible elections within the time frame set by the Constitution.

17. At the eighth meeting of the Steering Committee on Elections, held on 22 April, the Independent Electoral Commission presented another progress report focusing essentially on operations relating to the revision of the voters' rolls. On that occasion, the President of the Commission definitively acknowledged that, owing to certain technical and logistical difficulties encountered during the revision exercise, the elections could not take place on 16 May as scheduled. He further disclosed that the Commission would formulate a revised electoral schedule that would take into account all aspects of the organization of transparent and credible elections.

18. On 29 April, President Bozizé convened a meeting of national stakeholders and international partners to discuss the new crisis in the electoral process. The meeting concluded that the elections would need to be postponed in order to allow sufficient time for the preparation and conduct of credible polls. The move was unanimously welcomed by all national stakeholders, including the opposition. A bill was subsequently tabled in the National Assembly to amend the Constitution so as to allow the President and the members of the Assembly to remain in office beyond the constitutional time frame until elections could be held. It is recalled that the President had previously sought and obtained a favourable opinion from the Constitutional Court on the proposed constitutional amendment. Also, the Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Matters sought the views of various national stakeholders on the proposed amendment prior to its submission to the plenary session of the Parliament. Nevertheless, the bill has been challenged by the opposition and some sections of civil society, which insist that the issue should be addressed through a political consensus among national stakeholders.

19. In the interim, the Independent Electoral Commission adopted a revised budget that was shared with the Steering Committee on Elections. The new budget was estimated at approximately $21.6 million, representing an increase of nearly $5 million from the initial budget drawn up in the wake of the electoral needs assessment mission.

20. In early April, a mission of the joint European Union/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) task force in support of the electoral process visited Bangui to finalize arrangements for the signing of a funding agreement on the European Union's pledged contribution of €6.5 million. France has for its part provided €200,000 directly to the Independent Electoral Commission to help kick-start its activities. The United States of America contributed $1 million to support civil society through the National Democratic Institute. Those funds, as well as those provided by France, were not included in the common basket fund for elections set up by UNDP.

21. UNDP had put in place, on 1 December 2009, a preparatory assistance project to which it contributed $365,000 in 2009 and $400,000 in 2010 through the common basket fund. This contribution enabled the Independent Electoral Commission to become operational and enabled UNDP to recruit a team of experts to assist the Commission in preparing and organizing the elections. Thus, an electoral census expert arrived in Bangui in December, followed by chief technical adviser on elections in early February.

22. The amount of $1.5 million was provided under the second allocation of the Peacebuilding Fund to support the electoral process. Of that amount, $1.1 million was earmarked for security-related aspects of the elections, while the remaining $400,000 was allocated to the provision of technical support to the Independent Electoral Commission, including the establishment of a national data centre for the elections. The project document relating to this allocation was reviewed and approved by the Peacebuilding Fund Joint Steering Committee on 21 April and the related funds have been made available.

23. In the context of the mandate of BINUCA to support the organization of peaceful, credible and transparent elections in 2010, my Special Representative held extensive consultations with national stakeholders and international partners, including President Bozizé, senior Government officials, opposition leaders, civil society representatives and regional and international actors. In January and March, for instance, her interventions were critical in encouraging the opposition to demonstrate flexibility and not to completely withdraw from the electoral process. My Special Representative also encouraged Government officials to find appropriate solutions to major political issues. As part of her efforts to ensure a coordinated and coherent international approach in support of the organization of credible and transparent elections, she chaired regular meetings of the international committee for the follow-up of the political and development situation in the Central African Republic and instituted fortnightly meetings with the group of African ambassadors.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

24. Despite the efforts of UNDP, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process has progressed slowly. The 31 military observers provided by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) arrived in Bangui on

5 December. On 17 December, the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Steering Committee adopted the road map setting the beginning of disarmament and demobilization for February and March 2010. Within that framework, the second phase of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration sensitization campaign, which was aimed at sensitizing the former combatants and the host communities and deploying the military observers, was launched on 5 February. Shortly thereafter, the campaign was aborted owing to disagreements between the main rebel movement in the area, APRD, and the Government regarding the modalities for the payment of daily food allowances to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration candidates.

25. In a bid to resolve the impasse, the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Steering Committee decided to delink the sensitization campaign from the establishment of local disarmament, demobilization and reintegration committees and the payment of food stipends. It was in that context that the establishment of the local committees and the payment of food allowances was successfully conducted in the north-western and north-central regions from 1 to 9 March. However, initial attempts to carry out similar activities in the north-eastern prefectures of Vakaga and Haute Kotto, from 22 to 30 March, had to be halted owing to the lack of cooperation from the commanders on the ground of the former rebel group, the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR), which presented a list of political demands to the Government.

26. Meanwhile, the sensitization campaign resumed and was conducted with relative success in the north-western and north-central regions of the country from 22 March to 8 April. In addition, the 31 ECCAS military observers were deployed in the field. At the time of reporting, the military observers were on the ground gathering information and doing the necessary groundwork for the verification of the lists of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration candidates.

27. During the campaign, the representative of the Front démocratiques du peuple centrafricain (FDPC) on the sensitization team and two local mediators were held hostage by FDPC combatants on the ground. This and subsequent developments suggested that FDPC had distanced itself from the Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement and was not ready to continue to be part of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. The sensitization campaign in the north-eastern region, including the establishment of local disarmament, demobilization and reintegration committees and the payment of food stipends to UFDR and the Mouvement de libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (MLCJ) former combatants, was eventually carried out from 14 to 25 May.

28. Owing to delays in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, it is likely that additional resources will need to be mobilized to ensure further implementation of the process.

III. Military and security situation

29. The overall security situation in the country remained volatile owing to the ongoing internal rebellion in the north of the country, the activities of road bandits and poachers, the lack of significant progress in the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the setbacks in the electoral process and the presence of foreign rebel elements, including those associated with the Ugandan

Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Front populaire pour le redressement (FPR) of the Chadian rebel leader, General Baba Laddé. Humanitarian operations of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been hampered by the deterioration in the security situation in certain areas. The situation may deteriorate further in the event of a withdrawal of United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINUCRCAT) from the north-eastern area of the Central African Republic.

30. In Bangui and surrounding areas, the security situation remains calm but tense, except for isolated incidents of petty crime, including break-ins and burglaries. Tension has been steadily rising, however, in the run-up to the elections.

31. Elsewhere, hectic and inconclusive efforts by the Government to carry out negotiations with armed groups that are not part of the Libreville peace process have increased tensions in the Vakaga and Bamingui-Bangoran prefectures. In the wake of the attack perpetrated by the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (CPJP) against the town of Ndélé on 25 November, the Government has attempted to reopen talks with the movement, albeit without tangible outcomes. On 2 April, CPJP launched another brutal attack against Ndélé, but failed to take control of the town, which was defended by a contingent of the Central African Armed Forces. At the time of reporting, the majority of the town's population had fled into the bush, while relief organizations had relocated their staff in the wake of the attack.

32. In the Vakaga prefecture, ethnic tensions linked to access to local resources, including taxes levied on imports from the Sudan, remained high but stable. Several incursions of various armed groups originating from Chad or the Sudan have been reported. The north-eastern area of the Central African Republic is increasingly used by those groups as a temporary safe haven. The proliferation of armed groups has resulted in increasing criminality, which in turn has resulted in a decrease in the delivery of much-needed and critical humanitarian assistance.

33. In the south-east, the deployment, since December 2009, of the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) in pursuit of LRA elements has restored some measure of security in the town of Obo. However, persistent attacks by LRA operating in small groups in rural areas have forced villagers to seek refuge near UPDF bases, leaving the villages empty between Mboki and the border with the Sudan. As of February 2010, UPDF operations forced LRA to move westward to look for supplies — notably food and clothing — and means of communication. At least 12 attacks were launched against civilians in various localities between February and April 2010, reportedly resulting in 23 deaths and more than 60 abductions. On 21 March, LRA reportedly attacked Agoumar, where the bodies of 14 villagers, killed with axes and machetes, were later discovered.

34. Certain localities in the rebel strongholds of Nana-Grébizi and Ouham, in the north-west, have become off-limits owing to the presence of elements of FDPC, which, as mentioned above, had been sending mixed signals regarding its continued participation in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. The security situation remained particularly tense in the north of Kabo (Ouham prefecture), where FDPC had barely been cooperating in the implementation of the Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement. In April 2010, FACA reinforced its presence in the area and retook control of the road to Chad after dislodging FDPC elements.

35. In the north-western prefecture of Nana-Grébizi, in the area of Markounda, armed clashes between Fulani herders, APRD and Chadian nationals in February resulted in the deaths of scores of Fulani herdsmen from Chad. This incident prompted the Chadian authorities to request the establishment of a tripartite commission of enquiry comprising representatives of Chad, the Central African Republic and APRD to shed more light on the alleged killings.

36. In December 2009, the leader of the former rebel movement Mouvement national du salut de la patrie (MNSP), Hassan Ousman, disappeared from his premises at the Bangui base of the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic (MICOPAX), a subregional peacekeeping force. The whereabouts of Mr. Ousman, who was also the Chair of the Subcommittee on Security and Armed Forces of the Dialogue Follow-up Committee, remained unknown at the time of reporting. Also, in January 2010, the former minister and leader of the rebel movement CPJP, Charles Massi, disappeared under unclear circumstances. As a result of these disappearances, the other former rebel leaders in Bangui appear to be growing increasingly concerned about their safety, especially after the Government of the Central African Republic initiated efforts to have them ejected from the MICOPAX base in Bangui, where they have resided since joining the peace process, pursuant to a decision of the Follow-up Committee established under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

IV. Gender issues

37. During the period under review, my Special Representative intensified her efforts to support the promotion of women's political participation and the fight against sexual and gender-based violence in the country, in compliance with Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). As part of the 2010 celebration of International Women's Day, BINUCA assisted the Ministry of Social Affairs, National Solidarity and Family and women's organizations in conducting awareness campaigns in secondary schools and organizing a workshop on investigation techniques and the production of radio programmes on violence against women.

38. In the context of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, BINUCA contributed to the promotion of the rights of minorities and vulnerable groups, such as pygmies and albinos. It assisted the Ministry in organizing advocacy campaigns with a view to promoting the rights of women belonging to social minorities.

39. With regard to the participation of women in the peace process, BINUCA worked with the Government and women's associations to facilitate the organization of a series of sensitization campaigns in preparation for the 2010 elections. About 500 women from Bangui and the provinces have benefited from these campaigns so far. It also held a three-day workshop, in collaboration with the Independent Electoral Commission, to train 75 women candidates for the parliamentary elections, drawn mainly from 20 key political parties and including 15 independent candidates. In addition, BINUCA facilitated a meeting convened by the association of women journalists on how to better communicate on issues relating to women's participation in elections.

40. BINUCA continued its partnership with Radio Ndéké Luka through the provision of a yearly subvention of $10,000. For its part, the local radio station continued to promote the mission's mandate and provided time for weekly programming on civic education, human rights and the development of a culture of peace, as well as a monthly programme on the activities of BINUCA.

41. BINUCA continued to work closely with the Government to support the promotion of a culture of peace through the decentralized national reconciliation structures established by the communications ministry. It also continued to extend support to the local press and national regulatory organs in the areas of capacity-building and institutional strengthening.

V. Socio-economic situation

42. The economy registered positive, but with sluggish growth. Real growth in gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009 was estimated at 1.7 per cent compared with 3.7 per cent and 2 per cent in 2007 and 2008, respectively. This slowdown could be attributable in part to the global crisis that affected the Central African economy through its leading exports (diamonds and timber). Thanks to falling food prices, the average annual inflation rate fell to 3.5 per cent after reaching a peak of 9.3 per cent in 2008. The external current account deficit shrank to less than 8 per cent of GDP in 2009, compared with over 10 per cent in 2008, following the decline in import volumes and improved terms of trade caused by the drop in world oil prices and an upturn in the prices of diamonds.

43. Fiscal performance has been encouraging. Domestic revenue registered a gradual increase, from 9.5 per cent of GDP in 2006 to 10.8 per cent in 2009. Prudent management of public expenditures (stabilized at approximately 13.8 per cent of GDP) resulted in a domestic primary budget surplus equivalent to 1.5 per cent of GDP in 2009. The surpluses have contributed to a reduction in bank debt and domestic arrears. Major reforms in the management of public finances have been undertaken with the assistance of development partners. With support from donors, the Government has drawn up a comprehensive medium-term reform programme for public finance management.

44. At the time of reporting, economic growth was expected to reach 3.3 per cent in 2010, while inflation was expected to fall below 2 per cent. The current account deficit was expected to stabilize, owing mainly to an expected increase in aid flows.

VI. Humanitarian situation

45. The humanitarian situation during the reporting period was characterized by a steady erosion of the humanitarian space in some important areas of operations. The underlying constraints affecting humanitarian access are fourfold: logistics, criminality, conflict and politics. Two international NGO workers abducted in late November 2009 from their houses in Birao were released in early March 2010. The deterioration of the security situation had a negative impact on humanitarian access and activities in the Vakaga and Bamingui-Bangoran prefectures and in the north of the Ouham prefecture. Meanwhile, the extension of the LRA-affected areas in the south-eastern region has led to the use of armed escorts for the delivery of food and

non-food items destined for up to 12,000 refugees and internally displaced persons in the area.

46. Renewed armed confrontations triggered new internal displacements and increased the vulnerability of the local population. While an additional 5,000 persons have been displaced during the period under review, the total number of internally displaced persons was estimated at 162,000. Some 31,000 refugees from the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo settled in the eastern and southern provinces. In addition, there were still about 137,000 Central African refugees in southern Chad and Cameroon. As at November, renewed insecurity in Équateur Province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo had triggered the sudden flight of 18,000 refugees to the Lobaye prefecture, south of Bangui.

47. Funding in support of humanitarian assistance and early recovery programmes remains unpredictable and limited. The Common Humanitarian Fund for the Central African Republic had mobilized $6 million by mid-year, while the Central Emergency Response Fund emergency window provided $3 million to cover the immediate needs of the 18,000 Congolese refugees in the south.

VII. Operational activities in support of recovery and development

48. Funding provided by the European Union enabled the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to continue to implement several activities in 14 "development poles" in the Central African Republic, targeting 18,000 vulnerable households. Vegetable gardening activities launched in September 2009 continued to help 220 farmer associations, or more than 4,000 farming households, through the distribution of vegetable seeds and tools with the collaboration of NGOs and the participation of workers from the Ministry of Agriculture. Other activities conducted in support of rural development include seed multiplication, rehabilitation of marshlands through vegetable and crop production activities, rehabilitation and/or construction of agricultural storage rooms, promotion of conservation agriculture, support to the reintegration of former combatants and capacity-building for the Ministry of Agriculture, NGOs and farmers.

49. In the health sector, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supported the Government in organizing two rounds of a nationwide vaccination campaign against polio in which about 809,000 children were immunized. Also, WHO continued to provide technical support to the Government in strengthening epidemiological surveillance of epidemic-prone diseases, including training management teams of health districts, pre-positioning drugs and biological materials and organizing appropriate responses to cases of meningitis registered in the health districts of three regions.

50. The Central African Republic has been heavily affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic and has been awarded grants by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to help combat the disease. However, the implementation of the national response to HIV/AIDS has encountered a number of obstacles, particularly in terms of access to treatment, prevention, care and support services. To help overcome those hurdles, a joint mission was undertaken in January 2010 by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the Global Fund, the Roll Back

Malaria Partnership, Ensemble pour une solidarité thérapeutique hospitalière en réseau, the United States Agency for International Development, France coopération internationale and Grant Management Solutions to meet with Government officials. BINUCA noted the risk of antiretroviral drug stocks running out before the end of January 2010. As a result, an emergency order of 50,000 doses of antiretroviral drugs was submitted to the Centrale humanitaire médico-pharmaceutique in Nairobi, paid directly by the Global Fund. The Government also made a special commitment for an order that would cover approximately 2.5 months of treatment. Moreover, the National AIDS Commission has ordered three months of treatment to be funded by the Global Fund, to be renewed on a quarterly basis.

51. UNICEF has finalized an agreement for the conduct of a study on youth vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. It has also finalized the terms of collaboration with the National AIDS Council to conduct a national knowledge attitude and practices study among young people. Furthermore, UNICEF has continued awareness-raising activities in the north and the north-east and has provided training for 50 health personnel from nine districts on the new global standards for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission and paediatric care.

52. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other agencies of the United Nations system, as well as other partners, supported the Ministry of Public Health in boosting the national medical information system through a road map, the implementation of which will be coordinated by the Ministry of Public Health.

53. The World Food Programme (WFP) assisted some 320,000 vulnerable and conflict-affected people in the Central African Republic with approximately 4,300 tons of food commodities. Food assistance activities included emergency relief distribution to internally displaced persons and refugees, school meals for primary and preschool children, nutritional supplementary feeding for malnourished children and pregnant and lactating women, food for work projects on the rehabilitation of basic infrastructure and distributions for HIV-affected households.

54. In March, WFP led the transportation of the inter-agency convoy to the south-eastern province of Haut-Mbomou and provided life-saving food rations for 14,000 Congolese refugees and internally displaced persons affected by the activities of LRA. In addition, WFP conducted, in January and March 2010, emergency relief distributions to some 17,500 refugees who had fled the ethnic-driven conflicts in Équateur Province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

55. In the framework of its school feeding programme, WFP, together with the Government, launched a national deworming campaign on 6 February. This complemented school meals and contributed to improved attendance and academic performance of children living in the areas with a high prevalence of parasitic infection.

56. WFP also contributed to the safe and efficient movement of personnel and goods for the entire humanitarian community in the country, including United Nations agencies, NGOs and donors through its United Nations humanitarian air service, humanitarian transport, warehousing, and emergency telecommunication support. Furthermore, WFP promoted and supported the Government's participation in the New Partnership for Africa's Development Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme process.

VIII. Human rights and rule of law

57. During the reporting period, the human rights situation was marked by numerous violations. The disappearance of two politico-military leaders in December, the prolonged pretrial detention of individuals held with or without charges, cases of unlawful arrest and detention and the ill-treatment and torture of detainees have been documented during visits to prisons and detention centres in Bouar, Bambari, Bossangoa and Bangui by BINUCA human rights officers.

58. Cases of extortion and irregularities in the application of criminal procedures were generally observed. The treatment of detainees and conditions of detention remain well below international standards, while escapes by detainees have become prevalent, critically affecting the fight against impunity. Until appropriate attention is paid to the state of detention facilities, this problem will remain a serious concern. The detention of juveniles in violation of international standards and national legislation continued to be a matter of concern.

59. In the eastern prefectures of Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou, LRA was responsible for numerous human rights violations, leading to rising concerns about the protection of civilians in the affected areas. In recent months, elements of LRA carried out several attacks on the civilian population, resulting in the death, rape or abduction of many civilians and the addition of 700 to 1,000 internally displaced persons. It should be noted that children and women were particularly affected.

60. The human rights situation in the north, mainly in localities neighbouring Chad, remained a source of grave concern. The lack of effective State control in the area hindered the State's ability to protect the rights of its citizens. Refugee camps and sites have been targeted by local armed groups, including rebel groups operating in the region. Recent intercommunal clashes in Paoua, in the prefecture of Ouham-Pendé, skirmishes between herdsmen and some armed groups in Markounda, in the prefecture of Ouham, and fights between Central African Armed Forces and CPJP in Ndélé, in the prefecture of Bamingui-Bangoran led to serious human rights violations by the parties involved in those clashes.

61. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, visited the Central African Republic on 18 February. The visit, which was her first official mission to an African country, highlighted the importance of promoting and protecting human rights in a post-conflict setting and underscored the need for national authorities to ensure that human rights concerns are fully addressed. The High Commissioner raised several human rights issues and concerns with the authorities, who expressed their commitment to address human rights gaps and solicited further United Nations support in providing assistance and expertise.

62. UNDP convened 20 governmental and private experts to formulate actions to fight against acts of violence towards individuals accused of sorcery. That issue, as well as armed robberies and the trafficking of Indian hemp, were the subject of exchanges during a seminar on "the dynamic partnership around safety", organized from 31 March to 15 April, which led to the signing of a local contract on security outlining joint actions to be implemented by police forces, judiciary services, elected officials and civil society over the next three years. UNDP also continued to provide support to Government institutions in charge of justice and security through a project on reinforcement of the rule of law.

63. BINUCA continued to provide capacity-building support and training to the national defence and security forces as well as technical advice and support for the implementation of security sector reform. In that regard, the United Nations police initiated and supervised, during the first quarter of 2010, training courses for the police and gendarmes. A total of 15 gendarmes and 115 police officers benefited from various training courses funded and facilitated by BINUCA in the areas of forensics, computer science, communications and the handling and maintenance of weapons.

IX. Child protection and efforts to combat sexual and gender-based violence

64. During the reporting period, particular attention continued to be given to the situation of children affected by conflict, in compliance with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). UNICEF, BINUCA and Cooperazione internazionale jointly coordinated an operational plan for child protection in LRA-affected zones and have been able to engage in protection activities at several levels.

65. BINUCA and United Nations agencies in the Central African Republic continued to exert considerable effort vis-à-vis the various armed groups and the Government to the recruitment of children for military purposes. A total of 706 children (630 boys and 76 girls) were demobilized, and all have been successfully reunified with their families. In the south-eastern prefecture of Haut-Mbomou, UNICEF and its partners assisted at least 32 children and women used by LRA, who had been released and/or captured during hostilities. Eight children were repatriated from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, assisted in care centres and further supported for family reunification through the International Committee of the Red Cross.

66. UNICEF and its partners provided training for 5,492 children and young people (3,828 boys and 1,664 girls) in basic skills and in income-generating and livelihood programmes aimed at ensuring their self-sufficiency and, therefore, helping to prevent their further exposure to abuse and exploitation. Also, follow-up support continued to be provided through home visits and individual counselling. Moreover, 423 vulnerable children and youth (252 boys and 171 girls) received life skills training and literacy courses through non-formal education programmes.

67. To increase compliance with international legal standards regarding the protection of children and women in armed conflict, UNICEF and its partners provided training to 1,350 persons (1,032 APRD combatants and 318 local authorities) and 350 international peacekeepers on children's rights and on the prevention of under-age recruitment and sexual abuse and exploitation.

68. Furthermore, UNICEF continued to advocate with national authorities, including parliamentarians, for the adoption of the two additional protocols to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Advocacy to adopt a law on protection of children in the Central African Republic is also ongoing.

69. With regard to assisting survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, UNICEF, in partnership with the International Rescue Committee, supported the

establishment of a referral and post-care management system for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in 192 villages, including many located in conflict-affected zones in the north-west. Also, 57 community volunteers received basic training on prevention, response and referral mechanisms, which resulted in 108 self-reports by survivors who received post-incident support and follow-up.

X. Relations between the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic and the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad

70. BINUCA continued to provide the necessary political support for MINURCAT operations in the Central African Republic during the reporting period, including housing the MINURCAT liaison office in its compound and facilitating meetings between the leadership of MINURCAT and the national authorities. On 5 April, BINUCA facilitated the United Nations mission to the Central African Republic led by my Special Representative for MINURCAT, Youssef Mahmoud, to discuss the future of the mission in the north-west.

XI. Activities of the Peacebuilding Commission

71. A Peacebuilding Commission delegation visited the Central African Republic from 3 to 10 December in the context of the first biannual review of the country's strategic framework for peacebuilding. The delegation was headed by the Chair of the Commission's country-specific configuration on the Central African Republic, the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, Jan Grauls, and included representatives from the Central African Republic, Poland, Gabon, South Africa, France, Japan, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the Peacebuilding Support Office.

72. The mission concluded that the key challenges for 2010 would include the effective implementation of the country's disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and the organization of presidential and legislative elections. While the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process was technically ready to start, political and security challenges continued to hamper its operational launch. The Peacebuilding Commission stressed that responsibility for the successful completion of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration lay with national authorities.

73. The Peacebuilding Commission mission noted that while the Government had demonstrated ownership in the implementation of short-term commitments in the field of security sector reform, the security sector reform round table held in October 2009 had not yielded the expected outcome in terms of funding. The Commission encouraged the Government to streamline the list of projects submitted to the round table and to adapt them to the country's peacebuilding context.

74. Recognizing the efforts made by the Government in preparation for the 2010 elections, the mission expressed concern over human rights abuses and the weak capacity of the Independent Electoral Commission to organize free, fair and credible elections within the constitutional timelines. The Commission reiterated its

readiness to provide support to the national institutions, including financial support, to ensure that elections are held within those timelines.

75. During the reporting period, the country-specific configuration on the Central African Republic held three meetings, in December 2009 and January and March 2010, and issued a statement. The conclusions and recommendations of the first biannual review of the country's strategic framework for peacebuilding were adopted at the meeting held in January.

XII. Peacebuilding Fund

76. The implementation of the 12 peacebuilding projects under the first allocation of $10 million proceeded smoothly, following initial challenges in the start-up phase. The implementation rate of the projects as at 31 March was slightly over 50 per cent.

77. Several agropastoral activities in support of communities affected by conflict were carried out under a project sponsored by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and implemented by the Danish Refugee Council. Income-generating kits were given to local associations and groups under the same project, as well as a project for the empowerment of women implemented by UNFPA.

78. After a series of consultations concerning the need for a sustained engagement to respond to peacebuilding challenges, I approved, in January, a second Peacebuilding Fund allocation, amounting to $20 million, for the implementation of the revised priority plan, which was approved by the Peacebuilding Fund Steering Committee and endorsed by the Peacebuilding Support Office. The revised priority plan addresses key priority areas in line with the strategic peacebuilding framework for the Central African Republic adopted on 6 May 2009.

79. The project on electoral support was discussed and approved by the Steering Committee at an extraordinary meeting co-chaired by my Special Representative and the planning minister held on 21 April.

XIII. Integration and common United Nations vision for the Central African Republic

80. The Government has welcomed the replacement of BONUCA by the integrated peacebuilding office. To that effect, my Special Representative and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and Francophonie signed the status-of-mission agreement on 7 May. On the same day, President Bozizé inaugurated the Place des Nations Unies.

81. The transition to an integrated mission has proceeded smoothly and is well understood by the Government and the United Nations country team. In an effort to implement the decision of the Security Council on integration, my Special Representative chaired a strategic planning retreat for United Nations system representatives in the Central African Republic, on 6 May, to discuss the principles of integration, brainstorm on the United Nations common vision for the country and define priorities for action. The outcome of the retreat should constitute the basis for

an integrated strategic framework for peace consolidation in the Central African Republic.

82. At the retreat, it was agreed that the BINUCA/United Nations country team Strategic Planning and Coordination Unit would prepare an interim integrated strategic framework that would serve as the basis for United Nations activities in support of peace consolidation in the Central African Republic, pending the finalization of ongoing discussions on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the period 2012-2016. Once developed, UNDAF will serve as the common framework for the entire United Nations system in the country and will bring together the political, development, human rights and humanitarian activities in support of a common vision.

83. In the meantime, an interim integrated strategic framework would address issues pertaining to good governance, human rights, reinforcement of State authority in the provinces, basic social services and community-based projects, security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

XIV. Observations

84. Since its establishment, BINUCA has continued to play a key role in the implementation of the recommendations of the inclusive political dialogue. It has also focused on ways to strengthen the work of the United Nations in the Central African Republic. The ongoing process for the preparation of the integrated strategic framework will enable the Organization to speak with one voice, share a common vision and adopt a coherent and coordinated approach in support of national efforts to address the complex and multi-faceted challenges facing the country.

85. I encourage the Independent Electoral Commission to continue its work with the support of both national and international experts, despite the challenges surrounding the preparation of credible, transparent and inclusive elections. I call upon the international community, through the Steering Committee on Elections, to continue to provide support to the electoral process in the Central African Republic. I also urge Member States to make contributions to the common basket fund set up by UNDP to support the elections. Those efforts would help to maintain the momentum generated by the inclusive political dialogue and facilitate the advent of a stable democracy founded on lasting peace and sustainable development.

86. I call upon the Government of the Central African Republic and all national stakeholders to expedite the implementation of the recommendations of the December 2008 inclusive political dialogue, particularly those relating to security and armed groups, and to continue to be guided by the same spirit of consensus and consultation that characterized the dialogue.

87. I have taken note of the consensual decision to postpone the holding of elections and the adoption of two constitutional amendments enabling the President and the National Assembly to remain in office after the expiration of their mandates. I urge all national stakeholders in the Central African Republic to show a high level of responsibility and respect for the constitutional order and to agree on a consensual approach to move the electoral process forward. In that regard, I wish to emphasize the critical need for the Independent Electoral Commission to formulate, as soon as possible, a clear and realistic calendar for the conduct of elections.

88. I continue to be concerned at the slow pace of the implementation of the disarmament and demobilization phases of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. The completion of the process will contribute to the creation of an environment conducive to holding elections. Any further delay could lead to frustration on the part of ex-combatants waiting for disarmament and lead to a relapse into conflict. Efforts must also be made to bring on board armed groups that have not yet joined the peace process and to disarm the self-defence groups, the Kara, Goula and Rounga ethnic militias, which are not covered by the current disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

89. I remain very concerned about the disappearance of political leaders, particularly at this fragile juncture of the peace and national reconciliation process. I call upon the authorities of the Central African Republic to clarify those occurrences and to remain firmly committed to ensuring the safety of the politico-military leaders who have joined the peace process and who are currently residing in Bangui pursuant to a decision of the Follow-up Committee established under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in Libreville in June 2008.

90. I welcome ongoing efforts to demobilize and reintegrate children associated with rebel and other armed groups. It is important, however, to address the persistence of impunity, which perpetuates a climate of human rights violations, corruption and lack of respect for the rule of law.

91. I encourage regional actors to continue their efforts to enhance cooperation with one another, particularly with respect to information-sharing on negative security developments in the region. In this context, I commend and support the regional effort to address the LRA menace.

92. I would like to express appreciation for the constructive efforts of the international community, including the Peacebuilding Commission, to support the peace process in the Central African Republic. I commend the efforts of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa and support the recommendations of the thirtieth ministerial meeting of the Committee, held in Kinshasa from 26 to 30 April 2010.

93. I also wish to reiterate my appreciation for the multisectoral contribution of regional and international partners, including the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, ECCAS, the African Union, the European Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie, for their continued support for the peace and national reconciliation process in the Central African Republic.

94. Finally, I commend the staff of BINUCA, under the leadership of my Special Representative, as well as the entire United Nations country team, for the important work accomplished so far towards the completion of the integration process. I hope that enhanced coordination of United Nations activities will contribute to making a difference in terms of more effective service delivery and help to consolidate peace in the Central African Republic.